

# Just the Basics

South Asian



**Diabetes** is a condition in which your body cannot properly use and store food for energy. The fuel that your body needs is called glucose, a form of sugar. Glucose comes from foods such as grains, fruit, milk and starchy vegetables.

To control your blood glucose you will need to balance your portions of healthy foods with physical activity, and you may need to take pills and/or insulin.

Tips for healthy eating, diabetes prevention and management.

## Here are some tips to help you until you see a registered dietitian.

### TIPS

### REASONS

Eat three meals per day at regular times. Space meals no more than six hours apart. You may benefit from a healthy snack.

Eating at regular times helps your body control blood glucose levels.

Limit sugars and sweets such as regular soft drinks, desserts, candies, jam and honey.

The more sugar you eat, the higher your blood glucose will be. Artificial sweeteners can be used in moderation.

Limit the amount of high-fat food you eat such as fried foods, samosas and pakoras, mathiyai and cookies.

High-fat foods may cause you to gain weight. A healthy weight helps with blood glucose control and is healthier for your heart.

Choose high fibre foods more often (whole grain rotis, breads, cereals, lentils, dried beans and peas [dhal], brown rice, vegetables and fruits).

Foods high in fibre may help you feel full and may lower blood glucose and cholesterol levels.

If you are thirsty, drink water.

Drinking regular soft drinks and fruit juice will raise your blood glucose.

Add physical activity to your life.

Regular physical activity will improve your blood glucose control.

# Plan *for* healthy eating



- Be aware of portion sizes. Choose limited amounts of starchy foods such as whole grain roti, breads and cereals, rice (brown, basmati, parboiled), noodles, or potatoes at every meal. Starchy foods are broken down into glucose.

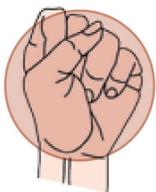
Photo courtesy of [www.TheSmalli.org/nutrition](http://www.TheSmalli.org/nutrition), adapted from *Healthy Indian Cooking for Diabetes* by Azmina Govindji and Sanjeev Kapoor.

- Eat more vegetables (Sabji/salad – not potatoes). These are very high in nutrients and low in calories.
- Include fish, chicken, lean meats, low-fat cheese, paneer or tofu, or eggs, as part of your meal.
- Have yogurt and a piece of fruit to complete your meal.
- Alcohol can affect blood glucose levels and cause you to gain weight. Talk to your healthcare professional about whether you can include alcohol in your meal plan and how much is safe.

It's natural to have questions about what food to eat. A registered dietitian can help you include your favourite foods in a personalized meal plan.

## Handy portion guide

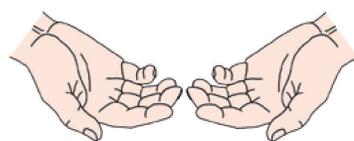
Your hands can be very useful in estimating appropriate portions. When planning a meal, use the following portion sizes as a guide:



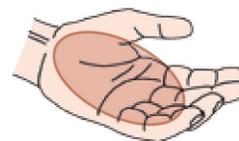
**FRUITS\*/GRAINS & STARCHES\*:**  
Choose an amount the size of your fist for each of cooked grains, starches and fruit.

**MILK & ALTERNATIVES\*:** Drink 2 to 3 servings of low-fat milk each day (1 serving is 250 mL or 8 oz).

\* Food group names taken from *Beyond the Basics: Meal Planning for Healthy Eating, Diabetes Prevention and Management* © Canadian Diabetes Association, 2005. Please refer to this resource for more details on meal planning.



**VEGETABLES\*:**  
Choose as much as you can hold in both hands.



**MEAT & ALTERNATIVES (PROTEIN)\*:**  
Choose an amount up to the size of the palm of your hand and the thickness of your little finger.



**FATS\*:**  
Limit fat to an amount the size of the tip of your thumb.

# Increase *your* physical activity

- Build time for physical activity into your daily routine.
- Try to be active most days of the week.
- Walk whenever you can, instead of taking the car.
- Start slowly and gradually increase the amount of effort; for instance, progress from slow walking to a faster pace.
- Make family activities active; try swimming or walking instead of watching TV or a movie.
- Try new activities; learn to dance, ride a bike or do yoga.
- Be active indoors: Climb up and down the stairs for 10 minutes at a time or walk in a mall.
- Enjoy your improved sense of health and well-being.

- The Canadian Diabetes Association recommends that all people with diabetes receive advice on nutrition from a registered dietitian.
- Good management of diabetes includes healthy eating, staying active and taking required medication.
- Be sure to eat breakfast. It provides a good start to the day.

## Sample meal plan

### FOR SMALLER APPETITES

#### Breakfast:

2 Slices of whole grain bread  
1 Egg  
1 Medium orange  
Black coffee – no sugar



#### Lunch:

2 Whole wheat chapati (6", 15 cm each)  
Lean lamb (2 oz, 60 g)  
Low-fat yogurt (¾ cup, 175 mL)  
Green salad (1 tsp, 5 mL low-calorie dressing)  
Sabji (no potato)  
1 Small banana  
Water

#### Dinner:

Rice, basmati/brown (2/3 cup, 150 mL)  
Dhal (½ cup, 125 mL)  
Green salad  
Saag with tofu (1 oz, 30 g)  
Cantaloupe (1 cup, 250 mL)  
Chai tea – no sugar (with low-fat milk  
½ cup, 125 mL)



#### Evening Snack:

Low-fat cheese (1 oz, 30 g)  
Whole grain crackers (4)  
Water



# Follow a healthy lifestyle

- Have at least 3 out of the 4 key food groups at each meal from Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide:
  - Vegetables and Fruit
  - Grain Products
  - Milk and Alternatives
  - Meat and Alternatives
- A vegetarian diet can also be a healthy diet.
- Have portion sizes that will help you reach or maintain a healthy body weight and manage blood glucose.
- Include high-fibre foods such as whole grain breads, cereals, and pastas, fresh fruits, vegetables and legumes.
- Make lower fat choices (e.g. use skim milk and lean ground beef, trim fat on meat, chicken etc., and use small amounts of added fat such as ghee and salad dressings).
- Keep active every day.

## Sample meal plan

### FOR BIGGER APPETITES

#### Breakfast:

2 Small whole wheat chapati (6", 15 cm each)  
Vegetable curry  
Low-fat yogurt (¾ cup, 175 mL)  
Blueberries (1 cup, 250 mL)  
Black coffee – no sugar



#### Lunch:

Rice, basmati/brown (1 cup, 250 mL)  
Lean chicken (2 oz, 60 g)  
Green salad (1 tsp, 5 mL low-calorie dressing)  
Saag  
½ Medium mango  
Water

#### Afternoon Snack:

1 Small pear  
Water



#### Dinner:

2 Whole wheat chapati (6", 15 cm each)  
Dhal (1 cup, 250 mL)  
Green salad  
Sabji (no potato) with tofu (1 oz, 30 g)  
Low-fat yogurt (⅓ cup, 75 mL)  
1 Medium peach  
Chai tea – no sugar (with low-fat milk, ½ cup, 125 mL)

#### Evening Snack:

Hummus (2 tbsp, 30 mL)  
Whole grain crackers (4)



Across the country, the Canadian Diabetes Association is leading the fight against diabetes by helping people with diabetes live healthy lives while we work to find a cure. Our community-based network of supporters help us provide education and services to people living with diabetes, advocate for our cause, break ground towards a cure and translate research into practical applications.

\*This document reflects the 2013 Canadian Diabetes Association Clinical Practice Guidelines. ©2013 Copyright

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